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Pro Wrestling Empire Hit With Teen Boy's Sex Scandal

PHIL DONAHUE: --about the wrestling business, sports entertainment, now stepping forward a lot of men saying that there's a good deal of gay sex abuse underway in the world of wrestling and everybody all these years has been scared to step forward. Now come forward a number of people to say, "Because I wouldn't have sex with another guy in the game, I couldn't get promoted," including three-- honestly, some-- *[audience laughter]* Listen, while you're laughing, this has been a not-so-funny issue for women. Now we have a casting couch, essentially, alleged in the wrestling game and some guys are saying, "I lost my job because I wouldn't do this to this guy who was higher, more powerful than me, on the ladder."

And before you think this is trivial, first of all, let's understand that a couple of these charges involve kids, 14 years old, juveniles. You go to jail for a long time if you're involved with sex of any kind with a juvenile.

One more point. The Wrestling Federation -- you know how you "Tee-hee, ha-ha, what a joke, ho-ho," -- \$1.7 billion in 1990. That's more revenue than has been generated by the NFL. So while you're laughing, somebody is whistling all the way to the bank.

We have three people who used to be in the wrestling game who are going to tell you that they indeed encountered people who wanted sexual favors and they were professionally penalized when they said no. And if you think the WWF is hiding behind lawyers, here is the head of that organization, who has accepted, incidentally, resignations from two executives who stand accused -- accused -- of gay sexual harassment. He'll have a prepared statement.

First let's get the charges underway here. Gentlemen-- Murray Hodgson *[sp?]*, hired by Vince McMahon -- you're on my left -- for the TV job -- you were the commentator -- and then fired two months later. What happened? Can you specifically, and without taking us around the world, tell us what is it that happened to you?

MURRAY HODGSON, Former World Wrestling Federation Television Commentator, Claims He Was Sexually Harassed: I wouldn't sleep with the vice president of operations, so they fired me.

DONAHUE: Is the vice president of operations one of those who resigned?

Mr. HODGSON: Yes, he is.

DONAHUE: And do you want to name him?

Mr. HODGSON: I don't think that'd be necessary.

DONAHUE: What-- did you announce-- did you do any color for any telecasts?

Mr. HODGSON: Yes.

DONAHUE: About how long did you do the color?

Mr. HODGSON: Well, I started for about a month. They hired me for a two-year deal and it just went right out the window when I decided that I didn't want to sleep with the vice president.

DONAHUE: Was there any touching? Was there any kind of vulgar locker room activity? We're trying to be specific here, Murray, as a court of law would oblige any person to be of any gender.

Mr. HODGSON: It was a little worse than that. He blatantly threatened my job security.

DONAHUE: He didn't say, "Sleep with me," did he? Is that the way men talk?

Mr. HODGSON: I don't think this is the proper forum to be discussing the graphic details.

DONAHUE: I agree with you and I appreciate very much your bringing a certain amount of decorum to this. This is a daytime television show and we don't want to draw any dirty pictures. Did it happen more than once?

Mr. HODGSON: No.

DONAHUE: Just once?

Mr. HODGSON: Yeah.

DONAHUE: And then how long after you said no were you dismissed?

Mr. HODGSON: Just a couple weeks.

DONAHUE: Barry Orton [sp?]- here's Barry O [sp?], the former professional wrestler who-- you think you lost your job with the WWF after refusing similarly--

BARRY ORTON, Former Pro Wrestler, Claims He Was Sexually Harassed: Actually, no. I've never actually said that. That's something that the media has come out and with the stories that I've given, they have kind of turned it around to where I've said that. I've never said that. However, I had encounters with two of the gentlemen that have resigned since the allegations began and these incidents, of course, happened in 1978, which is a long time ago. However, the impact and the gravity of the situations are very severe and, you know, if they were behaving that way then and, you know, they would be behaving that way now, I would expect.

DONAHUE: No laugh here. You accuse an executive of grabbing your crotch, legs and chest and wouldn't stop.

Mr. ORTON: Yeah, while I was in between the two of them in the back seat of a car on a trip.

DONAHUE: You were in the center?

Mr. ORTON: Right.

DONAHUE: And you thought it to be a place where a junior guy has to sit.

Mr. ORTON: Pretty much, yeah.

DONAHUE: This would be early 80's?

Mr. ORTON: This was 1978.

DONAHUE: Seventy-eight. So this was before the billion-dollar wrestling mania, pay TV, Hulk Hogan era.

Mr. ORTON: Oh, yes.

DONAHUE: And you had to drive-- you know, you guys weren't-- weren't walking in money then. You--

Mr. ORTON: Right. And everyone-- you know, the more people in the car, the better because everyone would split the expenses.

DONAHUE: Right. And then didn't you-- don't you say that you got out of the car and said, "Not me" and--

Mr. ORTON: Oh, yeah. You know, it went on for several minutes. I finally demanded that the car be-- first I thought it was kind of funny, that they were joking, but then it became, you know, harassment.

DONAHUE: Right. Barry, it would be hard for a jury to feel a whole lot of sympathy for a guy of your size, you know what I mean? A helpless woman you're not. How old were you when this transpired?

Mr. ORTON: Nineteen years old. I weighed about 35 pounds lighter.

DONAHUE: And also probably not altogether together in your head, like a lot of 19-year-olds. I don't know.

Mr. ORTON: Oh, absolutely not. You know, and I was trying to be accepted into-- you know, into the business. I was young. I was green.

DONAHUE: Yeah. And you got the big dream ahead of you, maybe you're going to be the big guy. And there was money if you got on the main card.

Mr. ORTON: To be made, yes.

DONAHUE: Yeah. So you're following your dream and I suppose you want us to know, among other things, that when a couple of guys in the game, executive types, come on to you like that and you're 19 years old, you may-- you know, you may be a little hesitant to tee them off.

Mr. ORTON: Of course. You know, and so I endured it for as long as I could until it became-- you know, I started feeling suffocated or, you know-- and I couldn't take it any more.

DONAHUE: Tom Hankins [sp?], you're likewise a pro wrestler. You-- what's your story, Tom?

TOM HANKINS, Former Pro Wrestler: Well, I'm a former pro wrestler. I got out of the business about four years ago. But back in 1985 in Los Angeles, California, at the University Hilton Hotel after WWF had run a card at the sports arena, I was sitting at a bar with-- can I name these people?

DONAHUE: Sure, go ahead.

Mr. HANKINS: With Pat Patterson [sp?], Andre the Giant, Dr. Jerry Graham [sp?] and Mike LaBelle [sp?]- he was the Los Angeles promoter at the time, or a former promoter in Los Angeles. And we sat there drinking, maybe for an hour or so, and I was talking to Pat. I'd known Pat for maybe six months. I knew he was gay, but, you know, it didn't matter to me if he was gay or not. And I knew-- he was actually kind of running the shows in L.A. at the time. I don't believe he was in position as the booker yet. And I asked him--

DONAHUE: Let me interrupt to say that he is one of the executives who has resigned.

Mr. HANKINS: Right.

DONAHUE: Very good. Sir?

Mr. HANKINS: And I asked him what's the chance of using me to do jobs, which means, you know, as a loser. I'm not real big. I never made a lot of money in the business. I didn't really expect to go in the WWF and make a lot of money, but I--

DONAHUE: But you wanted to be in the game.

Mr. HANKINS: Yeah, I loved the business. I worked-- I started out, I worked for \$10 a night sometimes in Tennessee, just to wrestle, just to be in the business. At the time in '85, I was wrestling in Hawaii, New Mexico and southern California. So I asked Pat for, you know, if he'd give me a shot or at least a try-out. And he said, "Well, you've got two chances-- slim and none." He goes, "Well, there is one way," and he wanted me to come up to the room with him and have oral sex with him. And I said, "Oh, I'm not interested." And after that, the shows-- when I went to the next show they had at the sports arena, went down to the dressing room, where they had always let me in. You know, in the dressing room, I was friends with a lot of the other wrestlers there. And Pat had me physically thrown out after that, acted like he didn't know me.

DONAHUE: Right. What brings you forward now, gentlemen?

Mr. HANKINS: Actually, I came forward because when Vince said Barry's charges were ridiculous, it was just-- I knew it was something that went on in the business and anybody in this business who really knew about it knew what was going on with Patterson.

DONAHUE: So this is, like, an-- this is a feature of this culture that has been underway for a long time and because it often involves near-jobless, vulnerable young males who wanted to be either in the game or on the card, they'd back up and nobody wanted to blow any whistles. And I think, if I may, this also should be said. You didn't get a lot of press scrutiny. Nobody took you seriously, anyway. Mainstream sports press today doesn't. And Mushnik [sp?] of the *New York Post* writes a piece-- Phil Mushnik of the *New York Post*, his lead last week, "The billion-dollar pro wrestling empire's about to be shaken to its foundations by a teenage boy scandal, the *Post* has learned."

All right, here's part of the story, then, and Mr. McMahon, sir, you are the boss. You are what we would call in my neighborhood, when we were growing up, a successful big shot. This is some operation you have, over \$1 billion in annual revenue. You have throughout the 80's taken this thing that so many people snicker at, you have filled the Pontiac Superdome, with the help of Hulk Hogan and an occasional theatrical idea that included Cindy Lauper and the marriage of kind of pop music with this-- through the roof! Through the roof. The PGA should pray for this kind of-- these kinds of revenue. And now here you are, being accused, Mr. McMahon, of presiding over an organization that looked the other way while these sexual harassment charges were being-- sexual harassment activity was taking place.

Sir, you wanted to say?

VINCE McMAHON, Owner, World Wrestling Federation: We've never looked the other way in anything, and I'm very happy to confront everyone today with whatever allegation they have. The three individuals about whom most of these allegations are hurled

are no longer with the WWF. We have started independent investigation on our own to get to the bottom of all of this and that's why we're here to day, is to get to the bottom of it. We may even learn something here today that my investigators do not know. I want to get to the bottom of it just like you gentlemen do.

DONAHUE: What would you like to say to him, anybody?

Mr. ORTON: I'd like to say that it's about time because up until now you've been adamantly denying that-- not only that this is taking place, but that-- and you're saying that you knew nothing of it and I just find that really difficult to believe.

Mr. McMAHON: Well, there's no reason-- how do you find it difficult to believe that I knew nothing of it? Why would I condone this kind of activity and risk this alleged kind of revenue?

Mr. ORTON: Because, Vince-- because you are the king of an empire and you have eyes and ears everywhere. And it is so common, at least a topic of conversation for three to five minutes every night in the dressing room because a lot of the guys, they have to put up with it and they hate it because if they say anything, they're out of a job.

Mr. McMAHON: I don't believe that to be the case, but there may be some of it. If that's the case, then let's get to the bottom of it. I'm anxious to learn, just as you are. I want a wholesome organization. I want an organization that everyone can be proud of. I want to get to the bottom of it, just like you do.

Mr. HANKINS: When this happened to me, I tried to call you. You know, I called the WWF offices. You were always in a meeting. They took my number, said you'd return my call. Well, you know, you didn't want to talk to me, basically. I'm sure at the time, you didn't know who I was, didn't know what I had to say. But, you know, I tried to explain it to whoever I talked to when I called and, you know, it didn't--

Mr. McMAHON: And this was when, sir?

Mr. HANKINS: In 1985.

Mr. McMAHON: I don't recall the telephone call.

DONAHUE: Has there been any lawsuit--

Mr. HODGSON: Do you believe that sexual harassment exists in your workplace?

Mr. McMAHON: I believe that there is a possibility of sexual harassment existing everywhere and I don't want--

Mr. HODGSON: I asked directly if it was in the World Wrestling Federation.

Mr. McMAHON: And I don't want it in my organization. I don't want it.

Mr. HODGSON: I'd like to reiterate the question. Do you believe there is sexual harassment amongst the wrestlers or employees of the World Wrestling Federation today?

Mr. McMAHON: There is a possibility of that. That's why I asked these independent investigators to come in and--

Mr. HODGSON: And who are these independent investigators?

Mr. McMAHON: The Fairfax Group, Limited. And I would like, you know, to hear what you have to say, and everyone has to say. I want to get to the bottom of it.

Mr. HODGSON: You believe that because of all these allegations coming forward and more and more corroborating evidence proving that there's no doubt sexual harassment is running rampant in the World Wrestling Federation, that you are definitely going to come public and do something about it?

Mr. McMAHON: Why wouldn't I? If in fact that is the case, why wouldn't I do something about it? Why would I risk what we have?

Mr. HODGSON: Because you haven't done anything about it until it became public, because you thought it was--

Mr. McMAHON: Because I had no knowledge of it.

Mr. HODGSON: I made knowledge of it to you when I was fired and you just blew it off and let me go. [crosstalk]

Mr. McMAHON: You were fired because you were not very good. You were not a very good announcer and you could not-- that's the only reason why you were fired. You could not make the transition from radio to television. That is the only reason why you were fired.

Mr. HODGSON: I would like to remind you, sir, that I have a two-year contract. Two years.

Mr. McMAHON: You also have a clause in your contract that states, and as you know, you were hired on a trial basis.

Mr. HODGSON: I was not hired on a trial basis.

Mr. McMAHON: You also have a-- you do not have a contract?

Mr. HODGSON: Mr. McMahon, I have a two-year deal with your firm.

Mr. McMAHON: In that contract, you will note the clause that states very clearly, and I have it outlined for all to see here today, that you can be fired almost at whim, if in fact you're not doing a good job. You did a horrible job. That's the only reason why you were fired. That's it.

Mr. HODGSON: Maybe I should point out, first and foremost, that might be your inability to pick good talent.

Mr. McMAHON: It could be. Granted. It could be.

Mr. HODGSON: You had a national talent search, Vince McMahon. You advertised in *Billboard* magazine and across many different media sources, searching for one man that could be the new face and voice of the World Wrestling Federation. You flew me in back and forth four and five different times from Detroit and you chose, over the course of one year of negotiations, that I would be the man for that job. I didn't sleep with your vice president. Two weeks later, I'm fired. I also want to point out one very important fact. From your office came a letter to my landlord to verify my employment. From that letter-- [crosstalk] I must bring this point up. It says, "Murray Hodgson has a very secure job with Titan [sp?] Sports and is a positive and productive employee," from your office. Just because I don't sleep with your vice president, that qualifies to blow me out of a two-year deal? I don't buy it.

Mr. McMAHON: Said very well, but I believe untrue. If in fact these allegations against Pat Patterson, whom you won't name, are true, why not pursue the legal course, the legal recourse? Why not pursue?

Mr. HODGSON: We are doing that right now.

Mr. McMAHON: You are? And you are aware that you waited six

months after you were let go to bring these homosexual charges against Pat Patterson? Six months you waited. Why?

Mr. HODGSON: September 14th--

Mr. McMAHON: If in fact you were fired on the spot, if you were fired from incompetence, all right, why didn't you say right then, why didn't you say, "Hey, look, Vince, your vice president made a pass at me"? You never told me that. No one had any knowledge. Human resources had no knowledge of that. Rene Dubose [sp?] was waiting to hear your story. Why did you wait six months? You asked me for \$160,000 today, otherwise you were coming on this program. I'm happy--

Mr. HODGSON: Excuse me?

Mr. McMAHON: --you're on this program.

Mr. HODGSON: Mr. McMahon, do not try to deflect the truth here. First and foremost--

Mr. McMAHON: What are you asking for? How much money have you asked for?

Mr. HODGSON: I have never asked for any amount of money from you. You have tried to buy me off to shut up so I wouldn't come forward and tell of these allegations that's running through the World Wrestling Federation.

Mr. McMAHON: Your attorney should be consulted.

Mr. HODGSON: My attorney, on September of 1991, came forward to you with a letter addressed to you, telling you exactly what happened and that I was discharged wrongfully --I had a two-year contract -- and that you, too, were well aware of the fact that there was a homosexual advance made against me. Don't tell me I waited six months. Three weeks later--

Mr. McMAHON: You waited six months.

Mr. HODGSON: --I was on your rear end.

Mr. McMAHON: Three months?

Mr. HODGSON: Six weeks later. [sic]

Mr. McMAHON: No. Sorry.

Mr. HODGSON: The only reason we waited a little longer was because you continued to try to negotiate to buy me out and I wouldn't allow it.

Mr. McMAHON: The fact of the matter is, if you look into this man's past, the fact of the matter, if you will look into your employment--

Mr. HODGSON: I don't think we should bring up the past.

Mr. McMAHON: Oh, I guess not. OK. Sure.

Mr. HODGSON: The issue at hand here, Mr. McMahon, is one thing and one thing only. You addressed on *Larry King Live* Friday--

Mr. McMAHON: That's not the only issue.

Mr. HODGSON: Friday on CNN--

Mr. McMAHON: That's not the only issue.

Mr. HODGSON: --you went on and you said that I never worked for the World Bodybuilding Federation. [sic] I am on a video that is sold around world-wide--

Mr. McMAHON: True, your voice is.

Mr. HODGSON: --my voice. So you told the country that I didn't

work for the World Wrestling Federation.

Mr. McMAHON: You weren't employed.

DONAHUE: They say you were a freelance and you were hired and--

Mr. McMAHON: Well, of course not.

DONAHUE: All right. I wanted to make the point.

Mr. HODGSON: Second of all, you said you fired me. You didn't fire me. John Philipelli [sp?] not only gave me the letter, but he also fired me. John felt so bad that I was being released that he allowed me to stay at his house if I wanted to and be with his family until I could find further place to live.

Mr. McMAHON: And that, my friends, speaks to all of the good deeds and good people throughout the World Wrestling Federation. We're talking about three people here. We're talking about three people, and only three people, that have these-- brought these allegations against. We're not talking about the 300. We're not talking about all the wrestlers and things of that nature. Let's keep some balance here.

DONAHUE: Let me make the point that this very important conflict transpires at a time that the all-time star of the wrestling game, Hulk Hogan, felt obliged to go on the Arsenio Hall show to say, "I do not use steroids," only to be followed by a number of--

Mr. McMAHON: I don't believe he said that, Phil. If I could--

DONAHUE: Well, he said, "I used them," what, three times for--

Mr. McMAHON: He did admit to steroid usage.

DONAHUE: He said "three times" and we have now several people stepping forward to say, "Listen, I sent Federal Express packages. They were picked up here and there." This is not to suggest that we know the absolute answer to this. This is rather to call your attention to the fact that now some inquiry extends to Hulk Hogan. Why is that important? Because he's on just about every kind of child's toy you can buy. We're talking Hasbro here, some of the biggest giants in the manufacturing of toys are-- and the images-- this is-- he's not yet Mickey Mouse, but \$1 billion worth of business-- how much at risk is this? And how much will steroid-- the steroid controversy find its way onto the front pages or the sports pages of our newspapers, an establishment that, as we have said, has largely ignored any kind of probe of the wrestling game.

We'll talk with journalists who have probed it in just a moment.

[Commercial break]

DONAHUE: Dave Meltzer-- Dave, you're an editor of *The Wrestling Observer*, which is what, *The New York Times* of wrestling?

DAVE MELTZER, Editor, "The Wrestling Observer": Oh, I wouldn't say that, but--

DONAHUE: All right. Well, you might as well. If I say-- John Arezzi is a talk show host, a wrestling program on WEVD-AM. You guys will agree that the mainstream folks really haven't had a whole lot of time for any kind of probe or serious attention to wrestling. Isn't that so?

Mr. MELTZER: Well, I think that that's-- wrestling in general has never gotten its due recognition as far as its popularity--

DONAHUE: As a business.

Mr. MELTZER: --as a business and entertainment--

DONAHUE: A very big business.

Mr. MELTZER: --both positive and negative. I think that it hasn't been given--

DONAHUE: Yeah.

Mr. MELTZER: And maybe perhaps that's why a lot of things have happened--

DONAHUE: OK.

Mr. MELTZER: --that--

DONAHUE: That-- you mean, over the years and nobody's-- no whistles have been blown.

Mr. MELTZER: Exactly.

DONAHUE: Give me your shortest speech, Dave. What's going on here? Why is this serious? I mean, I think we know, but there is a kind of a tendency to chuckle at this. You know, the big boys are-- you know, are playing with each other, is kind of "Ha, ha." And it isn't. It isn't.

Mr. MELTZER: That's right. Not at all, no.

DONAHUE: Well, tell them why. Tell them why they should-- why this is important.

Mr. MELTZER: Well, there are so many different issues here and the-- as far as-- as far as, like, a criminal thing, I think hopefully everybody in this panel wants just the truth to come out and I don't know what the truth is. I-- you know, we all hear different versions of a story and we just want to hear the truth.

DONAHUE: Very good.

Mr. MELTZER: So that's fine.

DONAHUE: John?

JOHN AREZZI, Wrestling Radio Announcer: Yes?

DONAHUE: What would you add to that? Same question.

Mr. AREZZI: Well, the mainstream media pretty much has ignored the entire situation. They really just started jumping on it last year with allegations of steroid abuse in the World Wrestling Federation and now they've really come alive.

DONAHUE: And what, you think that's what opened the door to these charges?

Mr. AREZZI: I think the-- I think what opened the door to all these charges, basically, was the fact that last year, after the steroid trial of Zaharian [sp?] and Vince McMahon started a steroid policy--

DONAHUE: Dr. Zaharian, Harrisburg, P.A., three years, steroid distribution.

Mr. AREZZI: Right.

DONAHUE: Yeah.

Mr. AREZZI: And after that trial, Mr. McMahon started a steroid policy and during that press conference, he did not invite the wrestling media. I alerted Phil Mushnik to that and after that, that's when certain people started calling Mr. Mushnik about other allegations.

DONAHUE: You speak of the *New York Post* reporter.

Mr. AREZZI: Yes.

DONAHUE: Superstar Billy Graham-- I'll tell you what, he's won his

sh... Former pro wrestling champ-- hey, baby. *(audience applause)*
Oh, they still love you, Billy. Don't tell them I had to give you a shot before the show, right in the mouth, because you were disobeying my orders. Former-- what's not so funny, Billy? Tell them. You saw ring boys, did you, being sexually harassed?

SUPERSTAR BILLY GRAHAM, Pro Wrestling Champion,
Claims He Saw Wrestlers Being Sexually Harassed: Yes, I've seen ring boys being sexually harassed. I--

DONAHUE: What's a ring boy?

Mr. GRAHAM: A ring boy's a person who is usually employed to put up and take down a ring, travel from one town to another.

DONAHUE: How old is he?

Mr. GRAHAM: Age group possibly from 13 to 19 to 20, fluctuates anywhere in between--

DONAHUE: And you saw what, Billy?

Mr. GRAHAM: I saw on one occasion, I believe it was in New Haven, Connecticut, Pat Patterson actually grab one of these children in the crotch while putting up the ring. I witnessed-- I came to the arena a little bit early. Walking by the ring to the locker room, I saw Pat Patterson with his left arm on the kid's shoulder and his right hand in his crotch. I witnessed this for myself.

DONAHUE: You also claim to have-- you did not see the abuse of a 12-year-old boy in the car. You mentioned this on Larry King's program.

Mr. GRAHAM: I wasn't on Larry King's program.

DONAHUE: Weren't you? Oh, I'm sorry. Barry-- I'm sorry. Sorry, you weren't. Bruno was. We'll get to Bruno in a moment.

Did you see-- you didn't see the abuse of a 12-year-old in a car by the ring announcer, did you?

Mr. GRAHAM: I didn't see the-- I didn't see the actual abuse. I was there the night in Allentown, Pennsylvania, when Mel Phillips was caught in the front seat of a car with a child approximately 10 years old, performing oral sexual--

DONAHUE: Yeah. Yeah, but-- now--

Mr. GRAHAM: --performed on this child of 10 years old. Brought into the arena by a security guard, confronted to Mr. McMahon -- Vince, Senior, and Vince, Junior -- and they said, "We will handle it."

DONAHUE: Is Vince, Senior, your father? That right, Vince?

Mr. McMAHON: Yes. And first of all--

DONAHUE: Is that true?

Mr. McMAHON: No. I don't know if it's true or not. I can tell you that no one ever came to my dad or to me--

DONAHUE: What was the year that this is supposed to have taken place, Billy?

Mr. GRAHAM: About '82 or '83. I can't remember. But the main part--

DONAHUE: We should also make this point, Billy. These are pretty heavy bombs you're throwing here.

Mr. GRAHAM: These are very heavy bombs, but they're honest bombs.

DONAHUE: But we don't have any proof and I don't think you're claiming to have seen the illegal act.

Mr. GRAHAM: OK, I may not have seen this particular illegal act, but it has gone on for so many years, just as the selling of drugs by Dr. George Zaharian has gone on for 15 years in the World Wrestling Federation--

DONAHUE: Very good.

Mr. GRAHAM: --witnessed and condoned by Vince McMahon, you see, and condoned by him sitting this close to Dr. Zaharian while he sold steroids, while he sold barbiturates, downers and uppers,--to every wrestler who wanted them--

DONAHUE: Yeah. Let me just--

Mr. GRAHAM: You see, I'm saying-- what I'm trying to say is, the man could condone this, so he also condoned the homosexuality. He put up with the drug-selling and he put up with the homosexuality.

DONAHUE: Let me just identify the cast of characters. You mentioned a Mel Phillips. He is another of the executives who has resigned--

Mr. GRAHAM: I don't believe he was an actual executive. He was a ring announcer.

DONAHUE: Was he not-- has he not resigned from the WWF?

Mr. GRAHAM: I believe he has resigned or been fired. I don't know which.

DONAHUE: Is he not one of the people who has--

Mr. McMAHON: He's one of those who is--

DONAHUE: Stepped down?

Mr. McMAHON: --alleged, yes.

DONAHUE: Following the publicity about this. Nobody's been proven guilty. We should get that point. You're denying you recall anything like this, looking the other way or--

Mr. McMAHON: Not only that, the thing of it is, why not speak up? If I saw something like that, I'd call the authorities. That's what you would do. A 10-year-old boy? You'd call the authorities. Come on! You're not going to let somebody like that get away with that. Please! *[crosstalk]*

Mr. GRAHAM: Why didn't you speak up when you allowed Dr. George Zaharian to sell barbiturate that killed-- almost killed Rick McGraw [sp?], that were in his bloodstream when he died, along with all of the--

DONAHUE: Yeah. Yeah. Billy, we're all smarter now about steroids.

Mr. GRAHAM: But wait a minute. Barbiturates and steroids, plus hard-core drugs that I had three overdoses with myself from Dr. Zaharian's drugs. And I'll tell you one thing. If my wife would have had a gun-- she flushed half the drugs down the toilet. And if my wife, sitting right there, would have had a gun, she would have killed Dr. Zaharian and she said if she would have had a chance, she would have killed Vince McMahon because he permitted it to happen.

DONAHUE: Yeah. Yeah, but you took them, too, didn't you?

Mr. GRAHAM: I was addicted because of the accessibility.

DONAHUE: Yeah. You must have been a real crank when you were

...man, doesn't it affect your personality? I don't want to put words in your mouth.

Mr. GRAHAM: You're addicted.

DONAHUE: But you're also crabby and easy to anger, aren't you? Doesn't it alter behavior and emotional and--

Mr. GRAHAM: Not if you're sedated. Not if you have barbiturates and you have--

DONAHUE: Could you compete and survive and be a top card person in the 80's in the wrestling game without taking steroids? Be honest.

Mr. GRAHAM: No. No. Not-- you would have to take steroids to-- in this man's World Wrestling Federation, to be on top, because--

DONAHUE: Because it made you bigger, you looked better in the poster, and you--

Mr. GRAHAM: And that's the market that-- that's the market.

DONAHUE: And we'll be back in just a moment.

[Commercial break]

DONAHUE: Bruno Sammartino, you did appear on the *Larry King Live* program last week. Are you impressed with Mr. McMahon's apparent acknowledgement here on this program, which was not forthcoming on that one, that maybe there is a problem?

BRUNO SAMMARTINO, Pro Wrestling Champion: Some of these poor folks out there are sitting there listening to these guys and when they *[unintelligible]* they even applaud them. Poor people. You don't know this man. Let me explain something to you. I retired-- I wrestled from 1959 to '81 and I retired. When I came back in '84 as a color commentator, believe you me, the world of wrestling that I left and the one that I found, it was bizarre. I mean, it was filled with drugs of all kinds. We're talking about steroids, but there was cocaine. In fact, this man, who pretends like he wasn't aware-- "Why didn't somebody come to me?" One time I had to go to Arizona, to New Mexico, different places, because one of his druggies was out of it and I took his place. And I really didn't care to at that stage of my life because I had retired. I specifically said to the man, "Hey, if I'm going to be going to these places in the arenas, I want to make sure that I don't drive with any of your wrestlers that are full of coke and whatever," so he arranged for this old-time wrestler, Jay Strongbow *[sp?]*, for me to travel with him because I wouldn't be in the car because I was always afraid of a car being stopped full of drugs. And he said to me, "Don't worry," he says, "I'll get the agent to rent a car so you can go around with him."

DONAHUE: Well, let me just say this in behalf of Mr. McMahon. First of all, all these charges are yet to be proven.

Mr. SAMMARTINO: They're just coming out.

DONAHUE: And if-- just-- I want to get to this, Bruno.

PANELIST: *[off-camera]* Why?

DONAHUE: Well, that's another thing. Why are they just now coming out? Let's understand this.

Mr. MELTZER: I can answer that question.

DONAHUE: What is it?

Mr. MELTZER: There's never been a forum for them before. If you-- you have to understand that the wrestling business has always been

a totally closed entity. It's like-- almost like an elementary school. You don't snitch. You don't tell. If something happens in the business-- there was a friend of mine, OK -- and it has nothing to do with Vince McMahon. I don't want anyone to think it does -- who was murdered in a dressing room. And it was very difficult-- this was in Puerto Rico. And it was very difficult for the wrestlers, even in the murder, to go to the police the next day and tell the truth. It took one of the guys who was a friend of the guys, says, "We've got to go tell the truth" and there was so much pressure--

DONAHUE: Right.

Mr. MELTZER: --on telling that, you know, that you don't snitch.

DONAHUE: I get it. But I-- this has to be-- this point has to be made. This-- these are men in groups--

Mr. MELTZER: It sure is.

DONAHUE: --not unlike the New York Mets--

Mr. MELTZER: That's right.

DONAHUE: --some of whose members are now under a very big, embarrassing gun of a charge brought by a woman. Just let me finish here. There-- I guarantee you there's nobody in this audience that's going to-- that's going to drop over of indignation to discover that pot-smoking may have taken place, that throughout the 70's and 80's, especially when the money started rolling in, cocaine started to take place. No doubt about that. And I guarantee you this bright audience knows damn well that steroids were used. This is easy to get. We know this. *[audience applause]* Now, wait a minute! Here's the question. Here's the question. Did the WWF or did the environment or did people in power not only look the other way, but actually condone the loss of jobs, the loss of employment, because of bold, bold, unrestrained aggression of a sexual nature by men in power on younger men who wanted to rise within the system?

Mr. McMAHON: Absolutely not.

DONAHUE: That's the question.

Mr. AREZZI: Can I answer that question, Phil?

DONAHUE: Sure.

Mr. AREZZI: Last night on my radio program I had two midget wrestlers on and--

DONAHUE: We don't see them anymore, do we.

Mr. AREZZI: No, we don't. We don't see them anymore.

DONAHUE: Tell them why.

Mr. AREZZI: Last night on my show, a midget wrestler by the name of Karate Kid *[sp?]* alleged that in a dressing room, Pat Patterson made some sexual advances towards him. The leader of the midget group, Lord Littlebrook *[sp?]*, went to Pat-- *[audience laughter]* No, it sounds bizarre and it is bizarre, but it's sad.

DONAHUE: Make the story, please. Running out of time.

Mr. AREZZI: Yes. OK. Lord Littlebrook went to Pat Patterson and said, "Leave this kid alone. He's not gay." He scared the little guy, you know, to tears. They were not used, but one time after that, after that sexual advance was--

PANELIST: *[off-camera]* Denied.

Mr. AREZZI: --denied, they wanted to use them one more time and

DONAHUE: Right. Vince McMahon-- here is the owner of the World Wrestling Federation and he's already lost how many? Two or three executives have resigned.

PANELIST: [off-camera] Two executives and one--

DONAHUE: Two executives and one announcer.

PANELIST: [off-camera] One announcer.

DONAHUE: Yes. Who worked right under him. What did Mr. McMahon know and when did he know it? And is it unfair to have asked him to give these guys the heave-ho, given the complexity of these charges? Who's got the evidence? Who's going to believe who? Did he fire this-- this is-- this is-- if it weren't so painful, it'd be fascinating. We've got the boss saying to the secretary who accuses him of sexual abuse, "I fired her because she couldn't type." Maybe she couldn't type. What is the truth?

We'll be back to explore it further in just a moment.

[Commercial break]

DONAHUE: Here are just some scenes from what it is that is mesmerizing millions of Americans, a lot of them young people. These pros in the wrestling game will tell you a lot of the folks screaming the loudest in the audience are young people, males and females.

David, your editor of *The Wrestling Observer*. Do you see Mr. McMahon coming forward here to open the door, at least, to the possibility here-- are you impressed with what he has said here in the first part of our program?

Mr. MELTZER: It surprises me and I'm glad he said it because--

DONAHUE: You're glad he said what?

Mr. MELTZER: I'm glad he admitted that there was a possibility because none of us know for sure. Maybe Barry does, OK, and Murray and Tom, OK? I don't know for sure. It's one person's word against another and maybe if the executives told Vince that this didn't happen, maybe they were telling the truth and maybe they're not. I can't tell you for sure, although I will say this. I do believe Barry's story. He took a polygraph and I've spent a lot of time discussing it with him and I think that I'm pretty decent at talking to wrestlers and separating the fact from the fiction. And I believe Barry's story. Some of these--

Mr. ORTON: I'd like to take the time to interject here--

DONAHUE: Barry, please. Sir?

Mr. ORTON: --and say that the big-- what the big story really was, was not-- was not really the story of where I sat between Pat Patterson and Terry Garvin [sp?], but shortly thereafter there was another instance. And remember, I'm 19 years old. And I drove from Amarillo to Albuquerque, New Mexico, with a single passenger, being Terry Garvin who, about 40 miles outside of town, started proposing that he perform oral sex on me while I was driving, begging me to let him do so. And of course because I was young, I didn't want to lose a position or a shot. And I don't have homophobia. I have no problem with-- you know, I'm a 1st Amendment person. I believe everyone has a right to do whatever they want to do. And I told him as nicely as I could, "Please don't be offended, but that's not," you know, "what I'm

into. And Nothing personal and," you know, "I'm still your friend, but no thanks." And he did this-- every 40 or 50 miles, he would start again and it got harder and harder to talk him out of it.

Mr. McMAHON: If that happened, that's horrible. But that happened--

DONAHUE: Well, let him finish his point.

Mr. McMAHON: I beg your pardon.

DONAHUE: And your point, Barry, is?

Mr. ORTON: My point is, is that Dave Meltzer just said, I have taken a polygraph about all this stuff--

DONAHUE: Right. But--

Mr. ORTON: --and came back totally clean. My point is, is that if he was attracted to young men and younger, because I even heard the stories of the kids underage back then--

DONAHUE: His behavior towards you makes you wonder about how he may behave toward others. Is this the point?

Mr. ORTON: Yeah, even now. I mean--

DONAHUE: And you also want to know what? I mean, you know, you can't-- we're not-- you don't want to get the posse and the rope and the tree limb for Vince on this, do you?

Mr. McMAHON: May I say something?

Mr. ORTON: No, I don't. I don't want to get the posse and the rope for Vince. However, this has been going on in the dressing room in the WWF with-- and I'm talking, you know, under Title 7 of the code of the law, it says that any unwelcome sexual advances, touching or anything else is sexual harassment.

DONAHUE: Right.

Mr. ORTON: Now, we have these guys who are bookers and top executives, and believe me, I'm out of here before they are. I know I can't go and complain. I'm sorry. Now, you can say whatever you want to say and you know that to be true.

DONAHUE: They have the power, no matter what you say, you're going to be dismissed.

Mr. ORTON: I'm gone because they are more important than I am.

DONAHUE: Yes. Yeah. You wanted to say, Bruno, very briefly, with all kinds of folks in this audience who haven't even had a chance. They're coming after me here. I'm going to need you in just a minute! Go head.

Mr. SAMMARTINO: McMahon said, "Why didn't they go to the authorities?" What you folks don't know is that you don't go to the authorities if you want to eat because you're *merde*. You're dead. You're finished, *kaput*, blackballed. His father blackballed me all over the country-- not for this, for some other issue.

DONAHUE: Well, let's not bring in the--

Mr. SAMMARTINO: No, I won't. I won't. I'm just talking about that there's no union, there's no protection for the wrestler.

DONAHUE: Very good.

Mr. SAMMARTINO: You speak up, you're dead.

DONAHUE: Vince McMahon-- here's the charge. You had to see this. Your agents right under you in the organization chart are accused.

all these years? Was the money so good, was the glamour so great, was the business exploding so wonderfully that you didn't have time to get into this kind of thing and you looked the other way and allowed it to happen? That seems to be the way this charge is evolving against you.

Mr. McMAHON: I certainly didn't look the other way. There's no reason for me to look the other way and risk everything that we have going for us.

DONAHUE: You didn't know any of this was going on, Mr. McMahon?

Mr. McMAHON: No, I did not. What Barry is making reference to is an act some 14 years ago. Fourteen years ago that happened. How am I supposed to-- I don't know that that happened. This is the first I'm hearing of it, on this show-- *[crosstalk]*

DONAHUE: Yeah. Do you believe it?

Mr. McMAHON: It could very well have happened. And to that extent, if in fact it did happen, again, those individuals whom these allegations are being brought against are no longer with me. I don't know what else-- more I can do, other than to garner as much information as I possibly can to see that if in fact some of this was going on, that it doesn't happen again.

DONAHUE: Yeah. You know, we're always going to have wrestling. The question is, how threatened now is this empire, with the accusations of steroid abuse and now gay sexual harassment? Because if it isn't-- if you don't convince-- obviously, this is-- I'm not suggesting I'm telling you something you already don't know. If you don't fix this, you're not going to be able to give these tickets away.

Mr. McMAHON: No question about it.

DONAHUE: And we'll be back in a moment.

[Commercial break]

DONAHUE: *People* magazine is out with a page-- a piece on "The Incredible Hulk," Hulk Hogan. You-- are you acknowledging here, that-- Billy, that you-- you actually introduced young wrestlers to steroids.

Mr. GRAHAM: I'm acknowledging that Hulk Hogan came to me in 1977 in Tampa, Florida, and inquired about steroids--

DONAHUE: Right.

Mr. GRAHAM: --because he wanted to be a wrestler. *[crosstalk]*

DONAHUE: I don't want to send him to jail for that.

Mr. GRAHAM: No, no. I'm not-- *[crosstalk]*

DONAHUE: All right. But you look back on it and you say, "Holy cow. That was wrong."

Mr. GRAHAM: No. But the point is, I freely gave the man that information in 1977, but the fact of the matter is, now he has gone on the Arsenio Hall show and lied to a national audience that he has never taken steroids except for three occasions and those three occasions being for therapeutic use only, for a torn bicep. I've injected the man myself probably a half a dozen times. David Schultz [sp?], a close friend of mine, has injected him over 200 times and Hulk Hogan himself has told me personally, "Superstar, I knew nothing about

steroids when I began"--

DONAHUE: But why--

Mr. GRAHAM: --"and for the first year I took a shot every day of my life, every day for the first year until I learned how to cycle steroids."

DONAHUE: Yeah. Billy--

Mr. GRAHAM: But my point is-- my point is, Phil, you can't--

DONAHUE: Billy, you're threatening a very big income here with this information.

Mr. GRAHAM: That's right, but you can't lie to children in this country about drugs. That's child abuse. When you get on television and you say you have never taken steroids and you've done it for the whole 10 years-- and when you've taken steroids for the decade of the 80's and when you've taken cocaine and other drugs and you lie about this to children, that is child molestation of their minds!

DONAHUE: Very good. Got you. Got you.

Mr. GRAHAM: You can't lie to kids about drugs.

DONAHUE: John Arezzi, you wanted to say, sir?

Mr. AREZZI: Didn't Vince say in published reports that you were devastated when Hulk Hogan make those statements on Arsenio?

Mr. McMAHON: I wasn't devastated.

Mr. MELTZER: That was the word you used to me. You used the word "devastated."

Mr. McMAHON: Well, all right. I don't recall using the word "devastated." Hulk Hogan I think told the truth. The question is, as far as the media is concerned, is whether or not he told the whole truth.

Mr. MELTZER: I don't believe he told the truth. *[crosstalk]*

Mr. McMAHON: OK. First of all, let me say this, that as you readily would recognize, Superstar, as you started this whole steroid phenomenon in, undoubtedly, professional wrestling, it seems to me that we're losing sight of the fact that steroids were legal at the time. I mean, it was just as legal-- *[crosstalk]*

Mr. MELTZER: Not in some states, they weren't. They were not legal in Florida. *[crosstalk]*

DONAHUE: All right. All right.

Mr. McMAHON: And that's why we instituted out steroid testing program.

DONAHUE: If you ask me, and nobody has, I don't want-- I don't want to string up a guy who took these-- football, wrestling, whatever, in the 70's or 80's before the sunshine started to come down on us about the terrible side effects of this drug. Your point about-- your accusation that he lied is a different--

Hello?

1st AUDIENCE MEMBER: Hi. To the three men on the end who lost their jobs--

DONAHUE: Yeah?

1st AUDIENCE MEMBER: How many people in the World Wrestling Federation today are performing sexual favors to keep their jobs?

Mr. ORTON: Well, today I would have to say I don't know because

the two main culprits, I guess, have resigned and stepped down.

1st AUDIENCE MEMBER: Well, when you were-- when you were working there, percentage-wise.

Mr. ORTON: Well, percentage-wise, I can't really-- I can't really say, like, you know, 30 percent, 50 percent. I know of at least one person that was there from beginning till end that--

[Commercial break]

DONAHUE: Hi. Are you there, caller? Briefly, you had to say?

1st CALLER: Yes. I have a question for Mr. McMahon concerning all those executives resigning. Don't you find it strange that all those accused have resigned? Why did you accept their resignations? And wasn't indeed Mel Phillips suspended?

Mr. McMAHON: Yes. You have one individual who was suspended who was not technically an employee, although he worked with us almost every day. And you have two executives who have resigned and we've accepted their resignation.

DONAHUE: Yes?

2nd AUDIENCE MEMBER: You talk about child abuse, but if you saw or had knowledge of a child, a young person--

DONAHUE: Should have blown the whistle right away.

2nd AUDIENCE MEMBER: You got it.

DONAHUE: Yeah, I get it. [crosstalk]

Mr. MELTZER: You have to understand the wrestling business.

Mr. ORTON: By coming forward right now, I'm done, man. I'll never wrestle, never, ever again under any circumstances. I am done.

2nd AUDIENCE MEMBER: [unintelligible] children. [crosstalk]

Mr. ORTON: But when you have a family to support and you're talking about your livelihood going out the window--

2nd AUDIENCE MEMBER: You can take care of yourself, but that man said he saw a child being abused. If that's true--

Mr. GRAHAM: No, I said--

2nd AUDIENCE MEMBER: --he is a scumbag!

Mr. GRAHAM: No, I said when you lie to children, that is--

2nd AUDIENCE MEMBER: You should have done something about it! I don't care about your career!

Mr. GRAHAM: --child abuse. That was my point.

2nd AUDIENCE MEMBER: [unintelligible]

Mr. GRAHAM: I didn't say--

DONAHUE: Bruno, you wanted to say?

Mr. SAMMARTINO: I wanted to tell that young lady-- please, they were reported. We told you the parking lot incident, when it was reported to them, they said, "Well, what they do on their own time"-- they didn't care. Don't you understand that?

DONAHUE: Over here.

Mr. SAMMARTINO: They didn't care!

DONAHUE: Over here.

3rd AUDIENCE MEMBER: First of all, I think that it's a shame that seven of the people on the-- six of the people on the panel, with the exception of Mr. Meltzer, are sitting there accusing Mr. McMahon, who so far has done nothing wrong. Mr. O, I know you've

been in jail. Mr. Sammartino, your son was fired under very suspicious circumstances.

PANELIST: *[off-camera]* That has no relevance--

3rd AUDIENCE MEMBER: How can you sit here and accuse Mr. McMahon--

PANELIST: *[off-camera]* --to anything here.

3rd AUDIENCE MEMBER: --out of personal vendettas?

PANELIST: *[off-camera]* None of that has any relevance.

Mr. SAMMARTINO: You don't know what you're talking about, sonny. When you grow up, maybe you'll understand a little bit.

DONAHUE: Yes, ma'am? Yeah?

4th AUDIENCE MEMBER: I'm just wondering why people go into wrestling in the first place.

DONAHUE: Money.

4th AUDIENCE MEMBER: I mean, they know it's--

DONAHUE: And the crowds.

4th AUDIENCE MEMBER: --not a pure art form. Even just looking at wrestling, you can see that--

DONAHUE: That what?

4th AUDIENCE MEMBER: It's tacky and it looks--

DONAHUE: A lot of people love it!

4th AUDIENCE MEMBER: But you can tell it's sleazy just by looking at it.

DONAHUE: There's a market for this.

PANELIST: *[off-camera]* A lot of people love professional wrestling.

DONAHUE: I've got to break. *[crosstalk]*

Are you there, caller?

2nd CALLER: Yes.

DONAHUE: I can't talk to you. Hang on. Maybe I'll get you in.

We'll be back in a moment.

[Commercial break]

5th AUDIENCE MEMBER: I'd just like to ask one question to the wrestlers that have been in the business for a long time.

DONAHUE: Let's go.

5th AUDIENCE MEMBER: How many are there, percentage homosexuals in the wrestling business?

DONAHUE: Oh, nobody knows that! How many homosexuals in your neighborhood? Report back to us on that!

What did you want to say? Yes? Yes?

6th AUDIENCE MEMBER: Isn't wrestling fixed anyway?

DONAHUE: "Isn't wrestling fixed anyway?" *[crosstalk]* No, that's-- you know, that's a creative decision, who wins. You know, the snake loses, the good guy wins. This is about crime. This is about breaking the law.

Yeah? What is it? Tell them about it.

7th AUDIENCE MEMBER: You said over here that if you blow the whistle on sexual harassment that your career is over. You're blackballed. I just want to know, is your career worth the price of these 10- and 13-year-old boys getting harassed?

Mr. SAMMARTINO: Absolutely not. You're right.